



THE RED DRESS IS THE NATIONAL SYMBOL FOR WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE AWARENESS

THE HEART TRUTH CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

***The Heart Truth:* Heart Disease is the #1 Killer of Women**

The Heart Truth is that one out of every three American women dies of heart disease. Yet, only 55 percent of women are aware that heart disease is their leading cause of death and most fail to make the connection between risk factors—such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol—and their personal risk of developing heart disease.

***The Heart Truth Campaign:* Serious Messages about Women's Heart Health**

The Heart Truth is a national awareness campaign for women about heart disease sponsored by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), part of the National Institutes of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Through the campaign, NHLBI leads the nation in a landmark heart health awareness movement that is being embraced by millions who share the common goal of better heart health for all women.

The Heart Truth campaign warns women about heart disease and provides tools to help them take action against its risk factors. It is primarily targeted to women ages 40 to 60, the time when a woman's risk of heart disease begins to increase. However, it's never too early—or too late—to take action to prevent and control risk factors since heart disease develops over time and can start at a young age—even in the teen years.

The campaign message is paired with an arresting visual—the Red Dress—designed to warn women that heart disease is their #1 killer. *The Heart Truth* created and introduced the Red Dress as the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness in 2002 to deliver an urgent wakeup call to American women. The Red Dress reminds women of the need to protect their heart health, and inspires them to take action.

The Heart Truth partners include: The Office on Women's Health, DHHS; WomenHeart: the National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease; the American Heart Association; and other organizations committed to the health and well-being of women.

Campaign Background

The Heart Truth campaign began in response to recommendations of more than 70 experts in women's health who met in March 2001 to develop a national action plan to reduce the toll of heart disease on American women. The campaign was developed with input from partner organizations and focus groups with women conducted across the country. This research revealed that most women underestimate their personal risk and do not fully understand the devastating impact that heart disease has on one's life and family. The research strongly supported the urgent need to tell women about their risk of heart disease and how to lower it.

(more)





THE RED DRESS IS THE NATIONAL SYMBOL FOR WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE AWARENESS

What's a Red Dress Got to Do With It?

The Red Dress was designed to build awareness that women are at risk for heart disease, and motivate them to take action to reduce their risk. The creative concept of a Red Dress tested well with women who cited its ability to get attention, convey the seriousness of heart disease, and change the perception that it is only a man's issue.

The symbol links a woman's focus on her "outer self" to the need to also focus on her "inner self," especially her heart health. The Red Dress serves as a red alert to convey the message that "Heart Disease Doesn't Care What You Wear—It's the #1 Killer of Women."

Seeking to advance the symbol, *The Heart Truth* forged a groundbreaking collaboration between the Federal government and the fashion industry, an industry intrinsically tied to female audiences. As a result of this partnership, fashion leaders—including top designers, models, and celebrities—have demonstrated their support for the issue of women and heart disease by participating in *The Heart Truth's* Red Dress Collections at New York's Fashion Week annually since 2003.

The Heart Truth launched the first Red Dress Collection at Fashion Week in February 2003, when 19 designers—from Vera Wang to Donna Karan to Oscar de la Renta—contributed red dresses for a stunning display under the Bryant Park tents. In February 2004, the fashion platform expanded with the creation of the first annual National Wear Red Day and the same-day debut of Red Dress Collection 2004—a fashion show featuring 26 new designs from the industry's elite designers worn by top fashion models and celebrities such as Vanessa Williams and Beverly Johnson. The campaign returned to center-stage in February 2005 and 2006 at Olympus Fashion Week with celebrity-studded fashion shows. Walking the runway for *The Heart Truth* in new collections of designer red dresses were some of the world's most recognized stars including Sheryl Crow, Venus Williams, Christie Brinkley, Duchess of York Sarah Ferguson, Lindsay Lohan, LeAnn Rimes, Fergie, and Eartha Kitt.

National Wear Red Day

The Heart Truth and many individuals and organizations celebrate National Wear Red Day on the first Friday of February each year. On this day, Americans nationwide wear red to join the national movement to alert women of their risk of heart disease. Men and women can participate by wearing a red dress, shirt, tie, or the Red Dress Pin. The Red Dress Pin is available at www.hearttruth.gov.

Mrs. Laura Bush: *The Heart Truth* Ambassador

Mrs. Laura Bush has been the national ambassador for *The Heart Truth* campaign since Valentine's Day 2003. Since then, as part of her Women's Health and Wellness Initiative, Mrs. Bush has been leading the Federal government's effort to give women a personal and urgent wake-up call about their risk of heart disease.

(more)





THE RED DRESS IS THE NATIONAL SYMBOL FOR WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE AWARENESS

She attended the launch of *The Heart Truth's* Red Dress Collection at Fashion Week in February 2003, and she hosted an American Heart Month kick-off event at the White House in February 2004. She also attended *The Heart Truth's* activities at Fashion Week in New York in 2004 and 2005. In May 2005, *The Heart Truth's* First Ladies Red Dress Collection debuted in a special exhibit at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. The Collection featured red dresses and suits worn by seven of America's First Ladies, including Laura Bush, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barbara Bush, Nancy Reagan, Rosalynn Carter, Betty Ford, and Claudia (Lady Bird) Johnson.

Campaign Resources and Activities

The campaign offers a wide variety of resources to help individuals and local communities spread *The Heart Truth*, including:

- Educational materials for women to learn about heart disease and how to reduce their risks
- The Red Dress Pin, the national symbol for women and heart disease awareness
- Speaker's Kit—a "talk-in-a-box"—and other promotional materials to facilitate spreading *The Heart Truth* message in local communities
- Online Toolkit containing activity ideas and materials to help individuals and organizations plan their own *Heart Truth* events throughout the year
- Online Activity Registry allowing organizations to share what they have done and learn about what other groups across the nation are doing to help spread *The Heart Truth*
- Compelling photos and stories of real women telling how heart disease changed their lives
- National public service advertising (print, radio, and television)
- Partnerships with national non-profit organizations reinforced at the local level to extend the campaign's reach and message
- Partnerships with key women of color organizations, including the Association of Black Cardiologists, Catalina magazine, *Essence* magazine, League of United Latin American Citizens, The Links, Inc., National Black Nurses Association, and National Latina Health Network, as well as campaign materials tailored specifically to Latinas and African American women
- Corporate partnerships to expand the reach and enhance the visibility of *The Heart Truth* campaign's message
- Community programs, such as the Single City program, Know *The Heart Truth* information sessions, and *The Heart Truth* Road Show, that extend the reach of *The Heart Truth* messages local communities

(more)





THE RED DRESS IS THE NATIONAL SYMBOL FOR WOMEN AND HEART DISEASE AWARENESS

What the Public is Saying about *The Heart Truth* and its Red Dress

Since its introduction by *The Heart Truth*, women around the country have rallied around the Red Dress and are celebrating the cause and taking ownership of the symbol. NHLBI has received numerous comments in support of the campaign and its Red Dress. Here are just a few:

"The Red Dress is Short, Sassy & Sweet!! I'm a 52-year-old woman who had a heart attack 9 months ago; now after 4 stents and 4 trips to the hospital, I can't wait for something to wear for people to ask me about. I have heart disease and now feel I should have never had the first heart attack IF doctors had checked me earlier in life. It's like the pink ribbon for breast cancer, people will know what you are wearing and why."

"I feel blessed to be alive. I remembered Mrs. Bush's message about listening to our bodies and that more people should pay attention to the unique symptoms women who have heart problems have. I had trouble Monday night, tuned in to news reports on Mrs. Bush on Tuesday, and on Wednesday night I went to the hospital. Mrs. Bush has a beautiful platform—something truly worthwhile to promote to save lives—and I am very supportive of it."

"I had my heart attack at 30 years old. I am 5'4", 118 pounds, wear a size 6 dress, work out 5 times per week, do not smoke, and eat healthy. Not all women who have heart disease are overweight, smoke, and over 50. It does not matter what you wear or what size you are—this is the message the Red Dress Project sends. Can there be a more powerful symbol for a disease that affects 8 million women?"

###

For more information, visit www.hearttruth.gov. To access camera-ready artwork, as well as photography and other creative materials for *The Heart Truth* campaign, visit <ftp://hearttruth.ogilvypr.com>.

